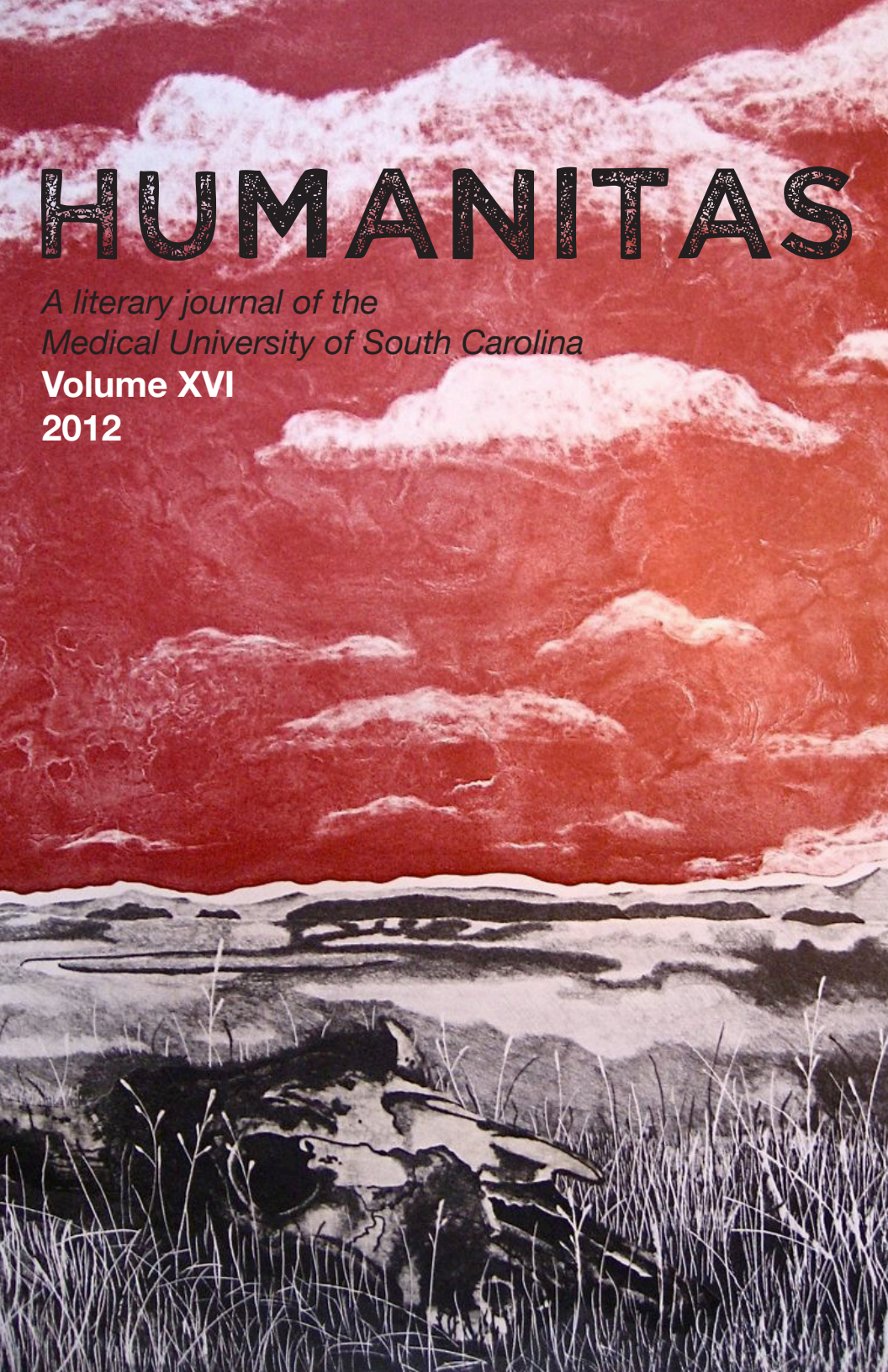


HUMANITAS

*A literary journal of the
Medical University of South Carolina*

Volume XVI

2012



Pelican
Candice Vinson
College of Dental Medicine



Great Blue Heron
Lisa Graves
Department of Ophthalmology



L. Graves

Foreword

Dear Readers,

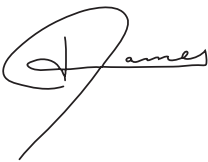
Humanitas started 16 years ago as a respite from the study of medicine; a rare opportunity in the busy lives of students, staff and faculty to indulge a part of themselves that often goes neglected. The hospital serves as a place of great joy, deep sadness, immeasurable triumph and profound loss; it is a microcosm of all aspects of the human condition. We encounter all of this and yet how many times have we walked home after a long day too tired to reflect on these experiences and how they have changed us? It is the aim of this publication to force us to slow down and open our eyes to the great beauty that surrounds us. It is through the arts that we can find meaning in the science we study.

Sir William Osler may have said it best:

While medicine is to be your vocation, or calling, see to it that you have also an avocation – some intellectual pastime which may serve to keep you in touch with the world of art, of science, or of letters.

This publication is made possible by the tireless efforts of all those who contributed. Selecting a handful of works out of so many excellent submissions was a humbling challenge. Please continue to submit your work; it is your talent that makes this all possible.

Thank you for your continued support of the humanities here at MUSC. I hope you enjoy this edition as much as we enjoyed producing it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James", with a large, stylized initial "J" that loops around the first part of the name.

Ted James

Awards for Humanitas XVI

Written

I Wear Your Ring

Toby Steinberg *College of Medicine*

Photography

Solstice

Michael Novak *Department of Pediatrics*

Artwork

Marla

Nancy Lemon *Center for Student Programs*

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Steven W. Kubalak	Regenerative Medicine and Cell Biology
Edward Krug	Regenerative Medicine and Cell Biology

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I don't care if Johnny has a broken arm, if Sarah has typhoid fever, if all of my oxen are dead, and if I just got bitten by a rattlesnake. You bet your wagon axles I want to hunt again. (Lithograph)

Mark Currin College of Medicine

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Man Outside the Whitney (Photograph) - **Arnold Metz**

Back Cover

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Department of Ophthalmology

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Yorkshire Dale
Jonathan Coullas
Center for Academic and Research Computing



Georgia Peach Tree Blossom

Agnieszka Jezierska-Drutel

Department of Cell & Molecular Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics

Standing at the floral counter, I can't believe what I hear her say, "I'm sorry, we are out of red roses." My heart was set on red roses for the centerpiece. A red rose is the perfect flower; the rich color and delicate scent. How can this be?

"I'm sorry but we can't get clear margins. I'm scheduling the mastectomy." My heart sank and the rising sense of horror coupled with nausea. "There are some great reconstruction options." That perfect part of my body that helped define my womanhood and motherhood will be gone.

My father was a farmer; he knew how to grow everything, including roses. But he chose to grow only red ones. Wordlessly, he would sneak into the house with the fragrant blossoms just cut from his prize bushes and surprise Mama with them accompanied by a gentle kiss. A red rose was his perfect expression.

The cancer is gone and I am grateful. But at what price? Is this vanity? I mourn my loss, miss the familiar, want perfection.

"We have some lovely spring bouquets that will look lovely, I'm sure," she said. I selected one with bright colors, a mixture of fresh white daisies and yellow roses. "These will do, I guess," I thought to myself as I resignedly walked toward the cash register. But they still aren't red roses.

Worker

Michael Novak

Department of Pediatrics





The Lizard's Thicket

Bryan Ashley

College of Medicine

He held the cup of coffee to his mouth, but did not take a sip. He returned the cup to the table. It took several seconds to sort through blue and pink packets before he finally located the sugar. He removed the packet from the tray and emptied its contents into the cup. He then poured in another container of cream. He returned the cup to his mouth and held it there. He finally took a sip. It was a ritual he had mastered. The waitress returned and he ordered pancakes. I informed her I would be sticking with coffee. Black. I folded the menu up and placed it on the table. Nothing looked appealing.

Several minutes had gone by since the departure of the waitress. The early crowd was in full force today. In the kitchen, the sounds of skillets and voices produced the familiar sounds of morning. "I thought you liked their sausage gravy," he said. I shrugged my shoulders.

"Maybe your tie is too tight?" He chuckled. I did not laugh.

My mind was going over the schedule for the day. Slammed. Just like yesterday. Just like tomorrow. This would likely be the last chance to sit down until I got home, fourteen hours from now. My pager buzzed. It was probably the hospital. Again. He interrupted my thoughts.

"Did you see the paper yesterday?"

"You should try the internet. By the time you read the paper, the news is old."

But there was no use in explaining that to him. My eyes wandered to his hands. Then to his naked finger. Still an odd sight. As if he had heard my thoughts, he began to scratch his scruffy face. He looked tired.

"Not sleeping well?" I asked.

"Sleep doesn't cure this kind of tired."

My eyes quickly moved away. In the napkin dispenser I caught my reflection, but it was too distorted to see clearly. The waitress returned. She placed the check on the table. The battle would begin. After several protestations, he felt he had sufficiently pled his case. I removed my wallet from the breast pocket of my blazer. I looked up to find him smirking at me. I opened it up and sorted through the array of cards. I removed the American Express.

"Sky miles? When in the hell are you planning a vacation?"

"It's just a credit card."

The waitress came back and scooped the card on her way by. I couldn't help but notice her shoes. They looked comfortable. I felt a strange sense of jealousy. I wanted to wear them. Just for a day. Or maybe a lifetime. When I looked back at him he was staring at me.

"Wear the coat."

"What?"

"Wear the coat. Don't be it."



Fountain's Abbey
Jonathan Coultas
Center of Academic and Research Computing

Charleston
Latha Hebbar
Anesthesia and Perioperative Medicine



Full Circle

Diann Krywko

Department of Emergency Medicine

I reached out and touched her hand. “Hi mom, it’s Diann. Your daughter.” She looked up. “Oh, hi dear, how are you?”

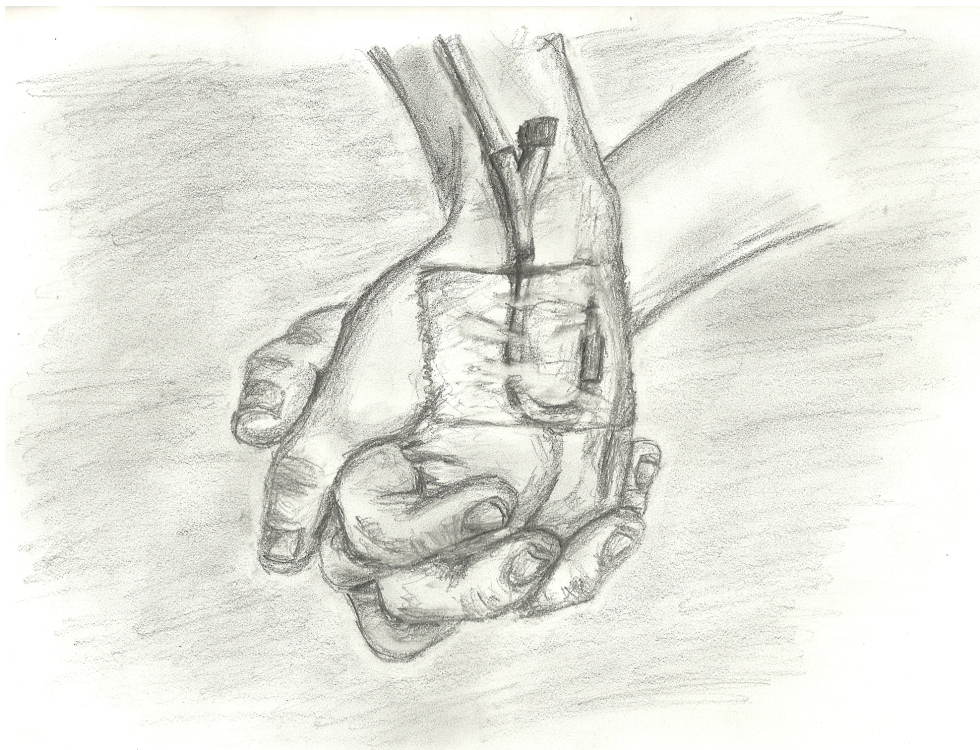
I had never really noticed how wrinkled they were, her hands. They were full of love and caring. They were strong. They had always been there to hold. The wedding ring dad had given her so many years ago still adorned her finger. Her hands were beautiful to me.

We sat and chatted for a bit. I talked about my life, upcoming plans, her grandchildren. She talked about the weather, her childhood, memories of good times with family.

We went out to enjoy the fresh air, the trees, the sun, the blue of the sky. She was steady on her feet, but I still held her hand. Her wrinkled, beautiful hand. We strolled about aimlessly. Our walk came to an end. We were back to our starting point, we had gone full circle. I would remember our visit, our walk, the sun, and the trees. She wouldn’t. Nor would she remember my life or her grandchildren.

I reached out and touched her hand. “Hi mom, it’s your daughter.” She looked up. “Oh, hi dear, how are you?”

Dedicated to my mother, Marguerite, and all those affected by Alzheimer’s.



Magnolia

Steven Rosenzweig

Department of Cell & Molecular Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics



Experiencing a flood of emotions as he stepped off the plane
harboring feelings he'd never be able to escape the mental strain.
Reflection of troubling times spent at war
left unanswered questions about what he could have done more.
The crowd jubilantly celebrates his unit's return home,
despite the attention his thoughts continue to roam.
He pauses and scans the environment around;
spotting his family his heart starts to pound.
He sprinted to hug them and embraces being reunited,
while suppressing the feelings sneaking in uninvited.

A couple months have passed. The excitement has settled.
He experiences discomfort when his mind starts to meddle.
The cool summer breeze and blue skies help him relax.
Hearing an unexpected noise he was taken aback—
A vehicle backfires. He springs to the floor. Protects his head.
Prays to God to make it out alive. He snaps out of it. He's safe.
He's home.
Uneasy and reticent to talk about what had transpired,
he remembers a time when deadly shots had been fired.
This triggers the thought of his friend and fallen comrade.
Now he's paralyzed with fear—frustrated, sad—feeling bad.
He reaches for the whiskey to escape his psychic pain.
Poor concentration and no sleep fuel the idea he's insane.

Now he wants to drink alone
and make an effort to disown
the memories of his fallen friend
refusing to bond with people again.

The alcohol starts to take its depressant effect.
His thoughts drive him crazy and make him upset.
He walks to the closet and retrieves his gun
sorting through the ammunition one by one.
Loading the round that will do the job,
he charges his pistol and begins to sob.
While troubled events in his mind continue to replay,
he enters a dreamlike state and relives that horrific day.

The sweat trickles down his face and burns his eye.
In the heat of battle the gunfire lights up the sky.

Invisible Scars (Continued)

He hears a whistle piercing the sand filled air.
The rocket attack was more than the unit could bear.
Shrapnel and fragments create metallic rain.
He turns to his buddy who is now in severe pain.
Everything stops.
His jaw drops.

He wasn't prepared for the sight he would see
his comrade had lost his right leg below the knee.
He races to put pressure on the casualty's thigh.
Trying to stop the bleeding he begins to cry.
While placing the tourniquet it gives way then breaks
as his buddy suffers from multiple battlefield aches.

As the casualty continues to exsanguinate,
he motions he has something to communicate.
"Don't fret my brother you did all you could,
probably more than a reasonable person would."
Fading out of consciousness, but still thinking clearly
"Please tell my wife and kids that I love them dearly.
I'll miss you brother. This you must know.
I've accepted my fate. Its my time to go."
The bleeding is stopped. A helicopter takes the wounded away.
Unfortunately his buddy dies the very next day.
Distraught and unaware of how he should feel
a blow to his confidence. He questions his skill.


He returns to the present from his apparent trance.
His unequivocal pain begins to enhance.
He raises his weapon and puts it up to his head
firmly believing he'd be better off dead.
He's nervous. He scared. It's making him sick.
He pulls the trigger, surprised to hear a click.
There he stands stunned by Divine intervention.
He calls the suicide line to relieve his mental tension.

Four years later he sits where his buddy lies.
He takes a deep breath then lets out a sigh.
“It’s hard to understand the pain that I feel.
The scars of war are very real.
Our combat days drove me into an abyss.
Having you around is something I miss.
I carry the guilt of the life I could not save
and experience a range of emotions like a never-ending wave.

As each day passes I continue to rebuild hope.
Counseling has taught me the skills I needed to cope.
Thank you for showing me suicide is not the way to go.
You stopped that bullet brother. This I know.
Your memory will be with me forever more
until we meet again at heaven’s door.”



Salt Flats of Uyuni
Kelsey Allen
Department of Family Medicine

An oil painting of two Japanese Koi fish. The fish in the upper right is a Kohaku variety, featuring a white body with large, irregular orange-red patches. The fish in the lower left is a Shirogoi variety, with a dark blue-black body and a prominent orange-red pattern on its side. The background is a dark, textured wash of brown and green, suggesting water and foliage. The brushwork is visible, giving the painting a rich, tactile quality.

Japanese Koi
A.J. Meelan
College of Medicine





Solstice

Michael Novak

Department of Pediatrics

Chain Reaction

Chris Attaway

Department of Pharmacology

Her breath wild down my back, I think of what I'm missing, And
take my step in line.

She said it all.

She saved the last part of life for me. She saved the best part of life
for me. She storms down my body,
And tells me of my wet past.

She wanted me to take my breath, Take it in my fragile hands and
go. Count the docks for me;
Count the rings of glass;

Count her strands of hair. Find me out there
Under her flowered torso, Her flowing torso

Which sets me gently out to sea,
Calling me back,
Full force; fully outstretched.
Her skin waited there where my feet touched down. Her hands
billowing out against my cheeks.

I could see her eyes crossing the horizon.
Her face, through the years, told me to lay still.



Marla
Nancy Lemon
Office of Student Programs



Sunrise Spectacular

Teri Lynn Herbert

Library Science and Informatics

Assunta
Christian Hicks
College of Medicine



Ode to the First Year Medical Student

Sauja Vadoothker
College of Medicine

The first year, eager to class
heavy back pack, hurrying on sun-beaten cobblestone streets
sweat dripping, rushing
in sliding into the back row seat.
Newly starched shirt, white coat in hand,
stethoscope around the neck.
The gunner, the “I-never-study”-er,
the “always in the anatomy lab”-er,
the professional athlete, the professional stressor.
The syllabus, the anatomy, physiology, homeostasis, and diagnosis.
Coffee-stained pages, watermarks on edges,
notes in the margin, highlights on phrases.
Sometimes in scrubs, hair tied up, smelling
of formaldehyde encased bodies.
The slow group, the crowded group, the smelly
body group, the group where only one person shows up.
Then test day and 2 pencils and bubble-in sheets
with 100 - no 200 - no 300 questions and six hours
of mood swings between high nerves and intense focus and
a freeing feeling of apathy around question 210,
full off lunch and mentally already at spring break in the Bahamas.
By the end of the year, slightly more blue.
Last summer ever and the beginning of
The second year, rather less eager for class.

Owl Spirit, Lake Eden Arts Festival

Bill Basco

Department of Pediatrics



Old Age is Waiting

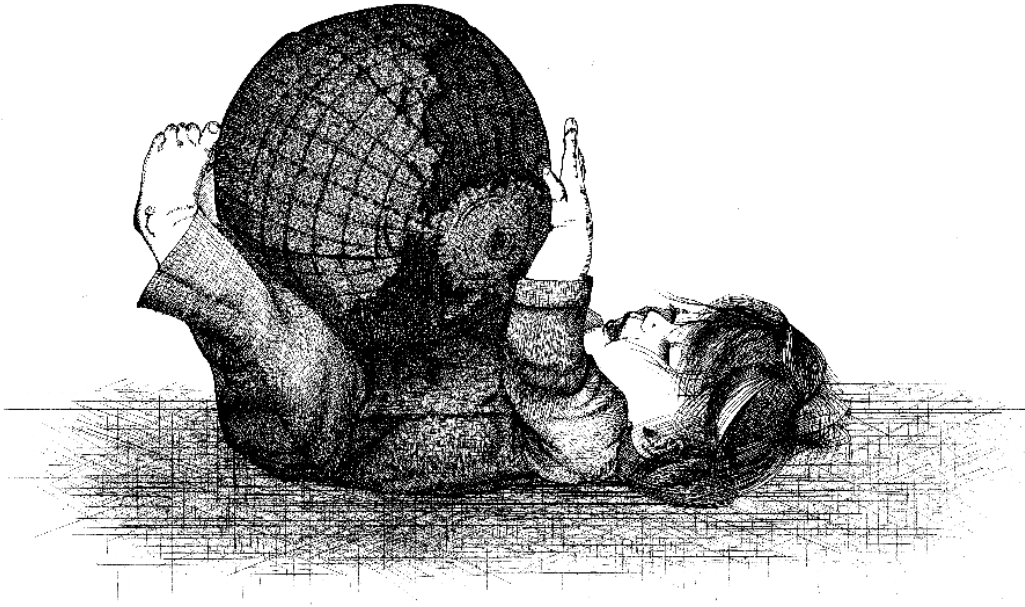
Eric Knapp

College of Medicine

I wait on the porch, I sigh, and I watch
I take a look at the clock, it slows, then it stops
There are children out playing, where the sunshine's waning
But nobody visits to sit, or to talk

I rise from my seat, to stand, just to see
Those children out playing will one day be me
Because I was once young, before springtime had sprung
But tomorrow, it seems, is a dream

I close my eyes, to rest, and I think
Night creeps in and deep my hope sinks
My ride... it is late, so I sit here... I wait
As the day drains away, just a blink.



Eulogy

Toby Steinberg

College of Medicine

I got my breasts when I was in sixth grade. All of my friends were still in training bras when my mother took me to get my first grown-up bra. I picked a white one with a blue flower in the middle. That summer, I wanted a string bikini because I finally looked like a woman, but my mother told me to dress my age.

In middle school, the fast girls announced their breasts with low cut, lacey shirts or strappy, white tank tops. All the older boys stared brilliantly, forgetting the girls had faces. (This was, of course, before girls knew that was insulting.) Our conversations centered around breasts: who had them, who didn't, who got theirs felt up by a boy after school in a dark room, who wished they were the one getting felt up in any room. It wasn't until eighth grade that a boy's tentative fingers made their way under my shirt and up to my breasts, and not until tenth grade that a boy admired the beauty of them as he fumbled to unsnap my bra. He softly kissed the alabaster flesh, mesmerized by its pink nipple.

That's how high school passed: all of the boys still spellbound by the very idea of breasts and the girls still wondering if their breasts were big enough, round enough, or the right distance apart. We compared ourselves to one another in the locker rooms and looked at magazines' models. The models weren't the best source for comparison, but somehow we all found ourselves coveting those breasts. And we thought if ours looked like that, then the hottest senior guy in our lunch period might actually look at us. So we shopped together: for pool parties, we looked for the right suit that would emphasize our new curves, and for Prom, we looked for the right push up bra that would not only give us the best cleavage but would also be sexy when our date unzipped our dress at the after party.

It wasn't until college that I grew to really love my breasts. In the dimly lit, drunken haze of bars, I learned the power of that

flawlessly cut shirt that made guys' eyes laser in on you, but still have to work to imagine your flesh. I felt feminine and sexy. In beds, I learned to lie naked, allowing a man's fingers to trace my silhouette and admire every millimeter of my breasts with his mouth.

When I met my husband, my breasts were wearing a little black dress. On my wedding day, they were perfectly perky in white, and on my honeymoon, my husband was perfectly pleased. When I gave birth to my first child and she found her way to my nipple, her little fingers curled against my breast, it was so beautiful that I cried. When I had my third child, I still cried, even though my breasts weren't so beautiful. My mother said she told me to appreciate them while I was young because one day they'd sag. I joked that I would've never had children had I known my breasts would look like that.

Now I am 39, and both of my breasts are gone. And I think back to the time when c-words meant my cup size, and cleavage, and caressing, and cradling, and not cancer.



Mother, Son, May, Charleston
Joshua Smith
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences



Dewdrops
Valerie Kirkland Moody
College of Medicine

Polemic Practitioners

Leah Fryml

College of Medicine

You never got a shot, and maybe
You're right, its not fair.
But You are a mere byproduct of her shameless work
and destined to mirror her pattern of destruction.
So we'll erase her Scarlet Letter deep within.
D and C, quick--
Before the secret's out.
Your mother needs a healer,
And I am her doctor.

You've run a good leg, and "Yeah,"
You say, "Life's a right fine gift."
"But no point clutching it 'til my hair chunks out, my insides rot
away,
and I wriggle my way to Grim's front door, beggin' for
mercy."
So, I'll leave this bottle next to your bed.
You'll slip into a cool, dreamless sleep--
Then cease to exist.
Cancer needs a healer,
But I am your doctor.

You've run out of time, apparently, and its a shame
You have no one to sorrow after you expire.
But you selected your path of prey, pitiless on panic-stricken little
girls,
and hearing the news, their families drifted into hollow non-
existence.
So I'll administer the lethal dose.
Thirty times what you could survive--
No heart beat.
Society needs a healer,
And I am a doctor.

You are right to question my knowledge and abilities, of course
You see right through the confident smoke screen.
But my sleep-starved mind dredges up textbook figures while
clumsy hands align the bones,
and needles, suture, and a bandage close the wound.
So we'll both survive Training.
And I'll practice my medicine--
A practice, not a perfect.
Future patients will need healers,
So yes, sir, I'm a doctor.

My hand is on my heart,
and I'm watching her hold
the starred, striped flag.
I'm pledging to my country,
to my God,
and I'm watching her lips move
just like mine.
She is reading to us,
The Giving Tree, and her voice deepens
as the boy grows old,
her face shifts from smile
to frown to convey the expression of the tree.
I'm building an ark,
block on top of block,
triangle on top of rectangle.
Noah's animals trot inside,
two by two,
lions, giraffes, zebras, bears,
safe inside the wooden walls,
safe from the raining thunder
that pounds and floods
the ground outside.
I'm swinging toward the sky,
hands gripping the metal chains,
head back,
feet stretching,
pulling me into the low hanging branches
of the oak tree,
toes sweeping across the crisp,
green leaves,
through the air,
kicking up sand as I go
back and forth again.

The Flame

Shannon Condon

Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

The match ignites as I give it a quick scratch against the side of its box. The crackling sound as the flame comes to life prompts me into action. I carefully tilt the match into the cylinder glass vase that holds the candle and I light the wick. I admire the glow from the candle, the flame that transfers from the match to the wick flickers first up and down and then side to side before settling down into the shape of a tear drop and hovers effortlessly over the center. The candle coupled with the single lamp that is lit in the living room creates an atmosphere of calm and tranquility. The scent of rosemary emanating from the candle's melting wax soothes my mind and invites me to sit and relax. I decide to do just that, I prepare a cup of herbal tea and along with my book settle in on my old weathered sofa. I pull an equally worn and cozy throw over my legs and curl up.

I sip the tea, the flavor is full and rich the long and vivid finish of spices immediately warms my being. I glance at the book resting on the side table. I've thought of this book each day since I chose it at the library, but for some reason now that I am here in this quiet moment I do not have a desire to read. I am again captivated by the dance of the candles flame. The flame of the candle has soothed me in such a way that I just want to sit alone in silence. I close my eyes for a moment, and thoughts begin to rush in, I acknowledge them, and try to let them go.

I try to focus on my breath, to combat my thoughts, but my mind does not keep them away they keep returning. There is so much for me to think about, the past, the present, the future. Ah the future, this causes me to sigh and cues another sip of tea along with the need for me to exhale. I remove an elastic band I am wearing around my wrist and pull my hair into a pony tail. I begin to wonder about the things I want that I don't currently have, I wonder if they are important or whether I should be focusing on something else. I close my eyes and lean my head back on the sofa.

When I open my eyes, I realize I must have slept for a bit. The candles wick is now floating in pool of melted wax; the flame gutters and then goes out. I smile, the little flame that is now gone, did well to serve as the catalyst for my recent moment of peace and respite for which I am eternally grateful. I think again of the candle and recall the dance of its flame, it reminds me of the way my thoughts were recently dancing in my mind, and I realize there is a commonality in that they have both now subsided.

Gunungan
Geoffrey Cormier
University Press





Ashley River Marsh
Tanisha Hutchinson
College of Medicine

All That Remains

Matt Ewald

Department of Emergency Medicine



I Wear Your Ring

Toby Steinberg

College of Medicine

I wear your ring but I do not know you at all, only as a withered body in the beige chair too big to hold you and the television drowning out all the lines we'd never speak. "Love you, Grandma," was all I'd say.

The Florida sun wanders through the blinds. It's all grey dust that rests in the creases of your skin and your wrinkled face is ash against your nightgown. You'll sleep during the five o'clock program.

I wonder how time sauntered away with the only two healthy memories I had of you, when you let me win at cards and whispered bedtime stories about Daisy Doolittle in her yellow dress. You told me you loved me.

Nine years will disappear before I wave goodbye to the groaning ground and another three before I wear your ring, silver flowers binding together its inscription. In 1941, he promised you one day it would be gold.

Memories written in your tiny cursive have been recycled and forgotten, but he never forgot the sound of your laugh or how you told him you didn't own a home phone so he'd called you every night on the drugstore payphone.

You were lovely eighteen and always happy as you climbed onto his leather seats and laughed at the stars. And I wonder if your lips smiled as your heart thudded the way mine did when the boy asked to call me every night.

But one day you were seventy and he was dressing your withered body, feeding you through cracked lips that never whispered kisses. Your face played tricks on your mind, a hollowed stranger in your clothes, and you coveted 1941.

I never knew the melody of your laugh, or how your eyes crinkled when you told your favorite joke, or what it felt like when you hugged me tight. I never knew what you thought your life could have been or what you hoped for me.

But I do know that your size four ring fits only me. I know my eyes are yours and the grooves of your finger are mine. I know that while you had your 1941, one day I will have my year with the boy from the car. And I'll be wearing your ring.

Just seeing over the gauge,
I stood between his outstretched arms
As we sped over the velvety sand road,
Billowing an orange exhaust behind.

Luscious patty fields to the side
Cut in perfect green squares.
Round, large prints in the road,
A wrinkled elephant totters ahead.

Painted oxen drag the bullock carts
Carrying green beans, tomatoes
Pumpkins and peppers
For only a few rupees. I see

Drifting dogs
 Abandoned Cows
 Vagrant People.

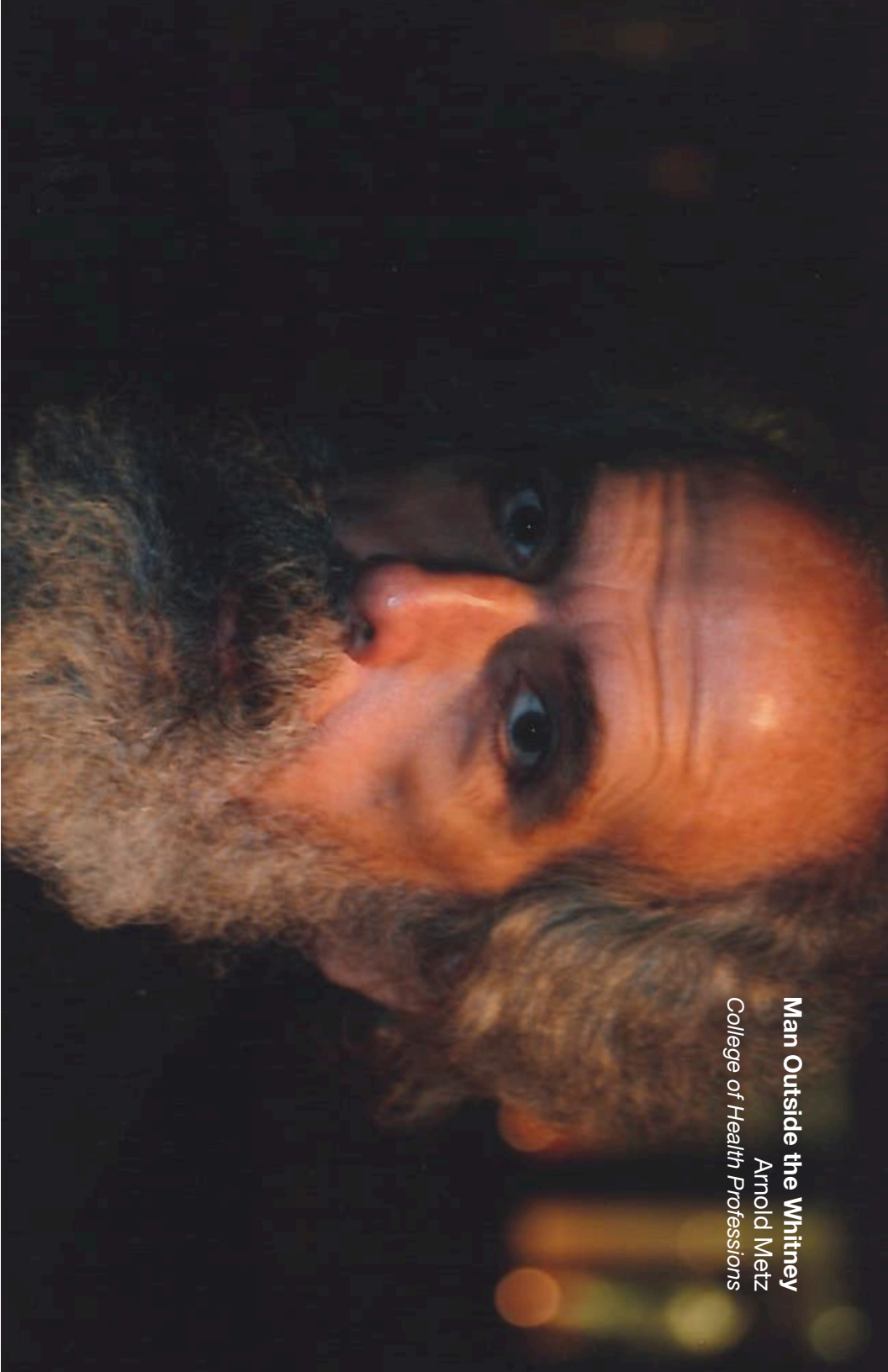
And we turn onto Puthur Road,
I rattle between my Uncle's arms.
We slow in front of the massive gate
To our home where we can belong.



Marsh

AJ Meelan

College of Medicine

A close-up, high-contrast portrait of a man with a thick, grey beard and mustache. He has light-colored eyes and is looking slightly to the right. The background is dark and out of focus, with some warm, bokeh light spots visible in the lower right corner.

Man Outside the Whitney
Arnold Metz
College of Health Professions

